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Report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on the work of its first regular session of 2004

(19-23 and 26 January 2004)*

* The present document is an advance version of the report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on its first regular session (19-23 and 26 January 2004). The report on the annual session (7-11 June 2004) and the second regular session (13-17 September 2004) will be issued as parts II and III, respectively. These reports will be issued in final form as *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2004, Supplement No. 14* (E/2004/34/Rev.1-E/ICEF/2004/7/Rev.1).

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I. Organization of the session

A. Election of officers

1. The Executive Board elected as President H.E. Mr. Lebohang K. Moleko (Lesotho) and as Vice-Presidents Mr. Mehdi Mirafzal (Islamic Republic of Iran), H.E. Mr. Vsevolod Grigore (Republic of Moldova), H.E. Mr. Eduardo J. Sevilla Somoza (Nicaragua) and Ms. Diana Rivington (Canada).

B. Opening statements

2. The Executive Director said that the international community's preoccupation with the issues of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the highly volatile situation in Iraq, had diverted attention from the spectrum of threats to the survival, protection and full development of hundreds of millions of children and their families. She urged the Board to focus on the achievement of the targets for 2004 and 2005 set forth in the Millennium Declaration, especially the goals for gender parity in education, child survival and maternal mortality, fighting HIV/AIDS, enhancing immunization and improved emergency response.

3. The President said that during the coming year, the Board should focus on how the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) could contribute to the Millennium Development Goals. He added that fighting HIV/AIDS was a prerequisite for attaining all of those goals, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly in southern Africa.

4. The outgoing President, H.E. Jenö Staehelin (Switzerland), reflected on the successful work of the Board during 2003, especially in the complex areas of the UNICEF recovery policy and the allocation of regular resources. He suggested the Board could improve its working methods in a number of ways, and expressed particular appreciation to the National Committees for UNICEF because of their important work in terms of advocacy and fund-raising.

C. Adoption of the agenda

5. The Executive Board adopted the agenda, timetable and organization of work (E/ICEF/2004/2) for the session.

6. In accordance with rule 50.2 of the rules of procedure, the Secretary of the Executive Board announced that credentials had been submitted by 54 observer delegations, 3 United Nations bodies, 1 intergovernmental organization, 7 National Committees for UNICEF and the NGO Committee on UNICEF.

II. Deliberations of the Executive Board

A. Annual report of the Executive Director to the Economic and Social Council

7. The Executive Board had before it the annual report of the Executive Director to the Economic and Social Council (E/2004/3-E/ICEF/2004/4), which was introduced by the Director, United Nations Affairs and External Relations.

8. He also briefed the Board on activities that have taken place since the finalization of the report. For example, the UNDG and its members were sending out to country representatives a revised guidance note on joint programming, which would take into account experiences and lessons learned to date, the "second wave" reform agenda of the Secretary-General and comments made by delegations at their respective Executive Boards sessions. The note would provide guidance for the rationalization of joint programming practices to allow for an improved joint response based on agreed goals and outcomes, reduce transaction costs for Governments and propose project and fund management mechanisms for joint projects. The guidance note would help to maximize the effectiveness of United Nations country teams and respond to other concerns raised by delegations to the Executive Boards, Economic and Social Council and General Assembly. Another important step in the implementation of both General Assembly resolution 56/201 of 21 December 2001 on the triennial comprehensive policy review (TCPR) and the Secretary-General's second wave reforms would be the finalization of work on the simplification and harmonization of resource transfer modalities, scheduled for roll-out during 2004.

9. Recently completed consultations with representatives of the five United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) roll-out countries for 2003 (Benin, Ecuador, Kenya, Niger and Pakistan), which were the first to have introduced the full range of harmonized tools and programme procedures, would help to provide more effective guidance to country teams, he said. In addition, an improved system of information sharing and collaboration had been established to ensure collaboration between the work of the UNDG agencies and the Millennium Project and Millennium Campaign, particularly at country level. Ensuring close collaboration for implementation of the Millennium Development Goals was an ongoing agenda item for the UNDG and the Chief Executives Board (CEB) and its subsidiaries, for example the next meeting of the High-level Committee on Programmes.

10. Concluding, he said that UNICEF was at work preparing for the TCPR report and related discussions of the upcoming Economic and Social Council and General Assembly sessions. UNICEF and the other UNDG agencies were working closely with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on preparations for the TCPR, including ensuring that there were high-quality evaluations of country-based results on which to base future decisions.

11. In the ensuing discussion, a number of delegations said that the report was of greater importance this year, as it was part of the UNICEF input to the TCPR. They encouraged UNICEF to contribute substantially to its preparation, including through input from the country level. The secretariat noted the importance delegations attached to the TCPR, confirming that UNICEF was participating in all aspects of the review and would keep members apprised of progress. Many

speakers also expressed strong support for the active role of UNICEF in the Secretary-General's reform efforts. Some delegations said that UNICEF and other United Nations organizations should be harmonized and operate as a strong entity at country level, with a common country programme, budget and representative or spokesperson, and that too little progress had been made by the United Nations on joint offices, joint programmes and the pooling of resources. Some speakers also expressed the need for agencies to maintain a strong identity and their own mandates. To comments about the United Nations field-level presence, the secretariat said that the reform process - including strengthening of the resident coordinator system, a common framework, common budgeting and planning procedures, and a common view of problems - would allow country teams to respond as a unified system to support implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Speakers welcomed the strategic support given to capacity-building in programme countries and the enhanced process of country ownership. The secretariat said that future reports will contain more information on gender mainstreaming. Many delegations expressed appreciation for the improved quality of the report, although some said that parts of it still needed to be much more analytical.

12. Speakers said that progress has been made with the new generation of Common Country Assessments (CCAs) and UNDAFs, which had yielded valuable lessons learned. Useful instruments included joint programming at project level and pooled funding arrangements. Others said, however, that the CCA and UNDAF processes could be time consuming and should be determined in conformity with national plans prepared by Governments. Addressing a concern over the number of countries harmonized based on "roll-outs" to date, the secretariat said that 80 per cent of country programmes were harmonized, with a majority already having "first generation" UNDAFs. The

current roll-out involved "second generation" UNDAFs, which were the basis of new country programmes being introduced in accordance with programme cycles. Delegations also welcomed the strengthening of the resident coordinator system, but said that the UNDG must find solutions to the gender imbalance.

13. To comments about inconsistencies in the UNDAF results matrices between the funds and programmes and the specialized agencies, the secretariat said that UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Food Programme (WFP) were bound by resolutions of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, while the specialized agencies had their own governance structures.

14. Most delegations stressed the need for core funding, as it ensured the global presence of the United Nations and allowed organizations to respond quickly to new and emerging needs. Donors were encouraged to improve the stability and predictably of their overall funding, preferably through contributions to regular resources or to give thematic funding in line with the strategic priorities of UNICEF. Speakers expressed support for the annual pledging event in the context of the multi-year funding framework, with one suggesting that during the upcoming TCPR discussions it should be considered as a replacement for the United Nations Pledging Conference. There was wide support for UNICEF collaboration with the World Bank and suggestions that it be expanded to the other Bretton Woods Institutions. It was also suggested that in future reports, work on Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) need not be in the section on cooperation with the World Bank. The secretariat replied that future reports would contain more detailed information on collaboration with the international

financial institutions. A delegation also said that in resolution 58/230 of 23 December 2003, the General Assembly had invited the institutional stakeholders of the International Conference on Financing for Development, including the Executive Boards of the funds and programmes, to include in their agendas relevant items on the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus in accordance with paragraph 70 of the Consensus. To that end, the speaker said, the Board should take necessary measures to do so and discuss relevant aspects of the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus.

15. Responding to an intervention concerning child survival, the Executive Director stated that child survival and development remained a high priority for UNICEF, as underscored by the World Summit for Children, the Special Session on Children and the MTSP. In recent meetings with partners, including WHO and the World Bank, it was agreed that there should be a strengthened child survival partnership. The partnership's structure was being designed with assistance from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and in March 2004 UNICEF would host a meeting to further discuss the arrangements, which would be launched publicly later in the year. (See chapter III, decision 2004/3, for the decision adopted by the Executive Board.)

16. The Board also had before it a note by the secretariat on reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of interest to UNICEF (E/ICEF/2004/5). Delegations expressed satisfaction with the report. One speaker referred to the JIU report on multilingualism and urged UNICEF to continue to make every effort to ensure that documents appeared on time in all official languages, both in print and on appropriate websites. The Executive Board took note of the report.

B. Approval of revised country programme documents

17. The President said that in accordance with decision 2002/4, the Board had commented on the draft country programme documents (CPDs) and approved the aggregate indicative budgets for 13 country programmes at the annual session of 2003 (see decision 2003/6). The draft CPDs had been revised, taking into account, as appropriate, comments made by delegations during that session and a summary results matrix had been added. The revised CPDs had been posted on the UNICEF website by 1 November 2003. Decision 2002/4 also stated that the revised CPDs were to be approved by the Executive Board at the first regular session of 2004 on a no objection basis, unless five members informed the secretariat in writing, by 12 December 2003, of their wish to bring any country programme before the Board. Because no such comments had been received, the revised CPDs for Angola, Benin, Congo, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ecuador, Kenya, Madagascar, Niger, Pakistan, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Somalia and the programmes for Palestinian children and women were approved.

18. The delegations of Kenya, Niger, Pakistan and Sierra Leone expressed appreciation for the support of UNICEF and said that the UNICEF programmes in their respective countries were in line with national development priorities. The representative of Somalia stressed the importance of promoting a culture of peace in his country and urged UNICEF to support projects that would encourage young people to turn in their weapons in exchange for the chance to go to school. He also said that the term "lands", as used in the CPD, was incorrect, as it did not reflect the territorial integrity of Somalia.

19. A delegation requested that the next round of CPDs, to be presented to the Executive Board at the annual session in June, include the UNDAF results matrix, and that the secretariat provide a table indicating the countries where UNICEF had programmes of cooperation and what stage of the harmonization process they were in. Another delegation suggested that in future, the revised CPDs include a preliminary paragraph explaining the revisions that had been made to each document. A delegation expressed concern about the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and stressed that food and other assistance must reach the intended recipients. The representative of that country said that his Government gave priority to the health and well-being of children.

C. Child trafficking: oral report

20. The oral presentation was made by the Chief of Child Protection and the Regional Directors for West and Central Africa and East Asia and the Pacific. The presentation, preceded by a short film on the subject, highlighted the massive, often concealed problem involving some 1.2 million children a year - the most vulnerable being girls - and netting $12 billion yearly for perpetrators. Mostly from poor families, children are trafficked for a variety of purposes, including sexual exploitation, cheap labour, adoption and marriage. The presentations emphasized simultaneous action needed on a number of fronts to support a protective environment for children: breaking the silence surrounding the issue; strong laws and penalties for offenders; the high involvement of children and communities in prevention, reintegration and care; and cooperative regional and international arrangements. These actions, it was noted, can be enhanced by the CCAs and UNDAFs.

21. Many delegations expressed their commitment to taking action to combat this global crime. Several said that UNICEF, with its extended field presence and credibility with Governments, could and should play a key role in the design and coordination of activities and advocacy. Speakers highlighted various actions that needed greater attention: cooperation among partners and between countries; punishment of offenders; improved prevention and care of those trafficked through better data collection, monitoring, community empowerment and the participation of young people; special attention given to vulnerable groups such as orphans; specific interventions such as birth registration, education and provision of access to other social services; strong laws; and innovative approaches, such as criminalizing sex tourism. Several delegates asked for more details on the work of UNICEF in child trafficking, including monitoring and education activities.

22. In their responses, the panellists described the increasing efforts of UNICEF to forge and strengthen partnerships, including those with the tourism industry, to improve prevention, data collection and monitoring. Also mentioned were new efforts by UNICEF to expand birth registration, to address power relations between men and women and to improve the life skills of young people.

D. Update on the United Nations Development Group (UNDG)/Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) Working Group on Transition Issues: oral report

23. The Executive Director presented the oral update on the Working Group, linking it to UNICEF work on child soldiers. She said that the report of the Working Group was still a work in progress but a set of clear recommendations had emerged and had been submitted to the Secretary-General. The

report would also be discussed by a high-level meeting of the three Executive Committees – UNDG, ECHA and the Executive Committee on Peace and Security. Her presentation highlighted the key elements of the report and how its findings and recommendations might relate directly to the work of UNICEF, although it was important to recognize that the report was not primarily about or for UNICEF.

24. She said that the Working Group had done its work on the basis of many existing reports and was grounded in field reality. The experiences of a representative range of eight countries had been studied and analyzed in detail, focusing on two major areas: (a) factors influencing government ownership of efforts in the transition from conflict to reconstruction and development and the role of United Nations leadership in this continuum; and (b) how United Nations country teams were using and adapting existing tools and instruments in order to provide appropriate responses and effective support. She also highlighted the vital importance of ensuring effective linkages and coordination between the political and humanitarian/development missions of the Organization. One of the report's most significant recommendations was that there is no need to establish new coordination mechanisms to deal with transition situations; existing structures and tools, if appropriately adapted, were sufficient to enable the United Nations to help countries move from humanitarian assistance to post-conflict to development. However, more needed to be done to ensure that in such situations the Organization's response was more effective in the two substantive areas of gender and HIV/AIDS.

25. The Deputy Director, Programme Division, added that UNICEF had used existing funding mechanisms for countries emerging from conflict, but as noted in the report, adequate, sustained but

flexible support from donors for transition situations was often constrained by institutional and policy divides within Governments. UNICEF had always tried to meet the Core Corporate Commitments which were at the centre of its humanitarian response, but child protection assumed special significance in transition situations, although it did not always receive the attention it demanded. In addition to direct support for specific activities, UNICEF increasingly played a broader role in some countries through needs assessment activities, discussion of larger priorities and ensuring that children were on the agenda. Another lesson with implications for UNICEF was that protecting children's rights was critical in all situations but assumed special importance in post-conflict situations, which also provided opportunities for capacity-building. Addressing needs of children was a prerequisite for ensuring stability and normalization. UNICEF generally tried to scale up activities in a post-conflict situation in the areas of: (a) "back to school" initiatives to help re-establish normalcy; (b) demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers; (c) special measures for child protection; and (d) addressing the impact of HIV/AIDS.

26. Delegations acknowledged the excellent work done by the Working Group and the leadership of UNICEF in the process. Several speakers highlighted the critical importance of the issues reviewed and appreciated the work of UNICEF in post-conflict situations in many countries, including efforts for child soldiers. Others hoped that the report's recommendations would be pragmatic and practical. Several delegations highlighted the role of donors in ensuring the implementation of the recommendations because of the persistent funding gap between the humanitarian and development stages. One delegation said that it had established a separate budget line for transition situations so as

to be able to respond more flexibly and help close the gap. A number of other delegations also highlighted efforts to provide more flexible approaches to funding.

27. A number of delegations said that the United Nations still needed to improve coordination in transition situations. Strong coordination in the field would enable the pooling of resources to help national authorities effectively, which was as important in post-conflict as it was in humanitarian action or in normal development work. The Deputy Director highlighted the important role of Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General in some countries and said that inter-agency task forces like those for Afghanistan and Iraq were now becoming standard practice. The Executive Director added that a crisis in a country could often give more vitality to the interactions among agencies and that the lead role approach often created better integration and coordination.

28. A number of delegations highlighted the good work of UNICEF in terms of education, reintegration and water and sanitation, and emphasized the critical importance of protection issues and of the rights-based approach. One speaker said that protection issues were sometimes difficult to envisage in concrete terms. Another said that pursuing a rights approach must not detract from concrete survival needs of children. The Executive Director replied that while UNICEF was anchored in child rights, child survival was an enduring priority in all situations and a rights approach did not change but in fact helped to strengthen it. Children were often forgotten in humanitarian and transition situations and a rights approach could help to bring them to the forefront. In terms of concrete protection measures, the issue was not that protection was too theoretical but rather that it did not fit

easily into "funding boxes". Its implications were very practical and concrete, for example in dealing with rape as a weapon of war or with landmines.

29. A number of speakers referred to the linkages between political and operational activities and to the need for an integrated approach in humanitarian and transition situations, as highlighted by the report. One speaker said that there were a number of risks in such an approach and funds and programmes should not exceed their mandates or compromise their positions. Neutrality and positions of Governments needed to be respected. The Executive Director said that UNICEF believed passionately in the importance of neutrality in humanitarian work but the issue in transition situations was to ensure that when a political peace mandate was given to the United Nations, the needs of women and children must be on the agenda.

30. The delegation of a country emerging from 15 years of conflict said that UNICEF had played a pivotal role but its work and that of others had been impeded and asked why not more had been done through such channels as the Economic and Social Council during those years. Noting that in her country 70 per cent of the combatants had been children, the delegate also asked if UNICEF had learned any lessons during this period and whether anything had been done during periods when there was a lull in fighting. The Executive Director said that security and access had been real problems during those years and remained a concern. The reintegration of 15,000 child soldiers in that country would not be an easy task.

31. Responding to comments about coordination between the funds and programmes and the World Bank and the work of UNICEF on needs assessment in several countries, the Deputy Director said that UNICEF increasingly was called on to provide substantive technical support to coordinate sectoral work, e.g. education in Afghanistan and Iraq. UNICEF often was asked to lead the water and sanitation sector, although it did not do everything in that sector. One delegation expressed some surprise at the growing involvement of the World Bank in transition situations and wondered how this was perceived by the agencies and whether the increased "grantization" of International Development Association credits would have an impact on collaboration. The Executive Director replied that the World Bank was largely not involved in emergency situations but clearly had a role to play in transition, as did the rest of the United Nations system. The United Nations could not compete if it was only a question of funds but it did have a role in assessment work and in helping to ensure implementation of activities on the ground.

32. Other issues mentioned by delegations included the importance of capacity-building in transition situations, the need for flexible responses, the importance of partnerships with other stakeholders, and the need to continue learning and applying lessons learned. Delegations looked forward to the full dissemination of the report of the Working Group and in following the progress of the implementation plan.

E. Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family: oral report

33. The Director, Programme Division, made an oral presentation on the UNICEF action plan of UNICEF for the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family (General Assembly resolution 57/164 of 16 January 2003). He said that the best environment for raising children was within a strong, loving, supportive family, enhanced by progress in gender equality, responsible roles of men in families, shared parenting and support for the rights of children and women. UNICEF supported the strengthening of families in several ways, especially through cooperation with partners and instruments such as the CCA and UNDAF. In the past 10 years, UNICEF had emphasized support for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, developing a strategy for supporting children's survival, growth and development; preventing family separation, including during emergencies; and addressing the challenges of HIV/AIDS. In 2004, for example, UNICEF would contribute to United Nations and regional conferences relating to family issues; continue supporting programmes to reduce child mortality; help to increase school attendance, especially for girls, through programmes empowering families to provide the best care; support families affected by HIV/AIDS; and undertake research with other United Nations agencies on the effects of family and other violence on children.

34. Delegations expressed appreciation for the work of UNICEF in this area. While several speakers said that the family takes many forms, all speakers emphasized the crucial role of the family in a child's well-being and development and as the first line of defence against poverty, war and other risks and challenges. It was also suggested that greater attention be given to gender equality; to efforts to support the vital participation of men in the family and their expanded participation in promoting

their children's health and welfare; and to women's empowerment, especially regarding their ability to make decisions on the number and spacing of children. In this regard, one speaker encouraged UNICEF to strengthen research on the linkage between poverty and family planning.

35. Speakers also said that special efforts should be made to support families - and extended families - that were grappling with crises or who were caring for children orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS. Providing those and other families with access to social services was crucial. Several African delegations said that there should be broader discussion of how to assist families coping with HIV/AIDS, especially those headed by grandparents and children, who, for example, require greater psychosocial care. The secretariat was also requested to provide regular information on efforts to support the family. The Director said that UNICEF was working with many partners, including indigenous NGOs, to address the needs and rights of children. Regarding HIV/AIDS, among other interventions, UNICEF was finding ways to better support families to promote healthy behaviours in children early in life. UNICEF supported the family through all aspects of the MTSP, and strengthening families improved efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals. It was crucial to ensure that family issues were at the core of CCAs and national development priorities.

36. The Executive Director added that UNICEF supported families in a number of ways, and that the MTSP priority of early childhood grew out of a longstanding recognition of the importance of the family and the critical early years of life. Responding to suggestions that youth participation be given

high priority, she said that UNICEF supported strengthening the participation and skills of young people, especially in response to such growing challenges as child-headed households.

F. Implementation of the UNICEF monitoring and evaluation plan: oral report

37. The Chief of Strategic Planning and Programme Guidance outlined the UNICEF approach to results-based management, which included the key elements of strategic planning, performance measurement and performance management at all levels of the organization. Results for children were achieved and sustained through programmes of cooperation that were aligned with the Millennium Development Goals, that built national capacities and that were well managed and supported by efficient operations and mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and oversight. Expected results, indicators, reports and management mechanisms were linked in the performance monitoring "architecture" of the MTSP. UNICEF planned to complete the design of standard performance management reports as the last element of this system by the end of 2004, consolidating key indicators from existing systems.

38. The Chief of Evaluation added that evaluations contributed to organizational learning and supported accountability. The evaluation function within UNICEF was decentralized, and in 2004, 200 evaluations were planned by country offices and eight major evaluations were planned by regional offices. Those were in addition to activities planned by the Evaluation Office at headquarters in the areas of inter-agency collaboration, MTSP priorities, guidance development and capacity-building.

39. Several delegations commended the steps taken by UNICEF to strengthen the evaluation function, to use results-based management tools and to focus on both situation and performance monitoring. It was also suggested that planned results for children should be linked to the Millennium Development Goals. Responding to a question of the main challenges for the implementation of the monitoring and evaluation system, the secretariat referred to the need to consolidate different existing information systems into one framework that assessed organizational performance and gave senior managers useful information for decision-making. Although the MTSP for the first time provided measurable targets, standards had not been developed uniformly for measuring organizational performance and the effectiveness of strategies. The highly diverse nature and size of programmes of cooperation posed a further challenge to organizational monitoring.

40. To a comment that a recent major evaluation of a multi-country initiative had encountered difficulties in identifying best practices because of inadequate reporting during implementation, the secretariat said that country-level progress reporting had improved gradually in recent years. UNICEF would continue to invest in generating higher-quality reports, including through the use of core indicators. Responding to concerns about how the organization intended to extract lessons from the 200 evaluations planned for 2004 and how they would be disseminated and used to influence policies, the secretariat said that efforts would be made during 2004 to strengthen the overall framework for identifying and disseminating good practices.

41. Several delegations, concerned that evaluation findings often remained under-utilized, asked how UNICEF shared data on children and women, how it disseminated evaluation findings and

lessons learned to staff and whether it exchanged experiences and lessons with other organizations. The secretariat replied that UNICEF provided feedback to staff using the Intranet and worked closely with other agencies, including the World Bank, in identifying lessons learned. A global meeting of evaluation staff planned for March would discuss improved methods to identify and disseminate lessons. Asked about the reasons for the postponement of evaluations, the secretariat said that the lack of expected funding has been a significant factor in the delay of certain evaluation activities, although a large volume of evaluation activities had been completed.

42. Asked about the upcoming mid-term review of the MTSP and subsequent adjustments to the plan, and the involvement of member States in the process, the secretariat said that the Bureau would address the issue to ensure a wide participation. To questions about strengthening the evaluation capacity of national partners, the secretariat said that that available training materials could also be used for the capacity development of programme partners. UNICEF also continued to support the creation and strengthening of national evaluation associations. Overall, evaluative work should always take into account the wider context set by United Nations reform. UNICEF was participating in direct evaluations of CCAs and UNDAFs and was supporting preparations for the upcoming TCPR.

G. Report on the evaluation of the World Health Organization (WHO)/UNICEF/UNFPA Coordinating Committee on Health

43. The Executive Board had before it a note by the secretariat on the evaluation of the Coordinating Committee on Health (CCH) (E/ICEF/2004/6) and the report of the evaluation itself

(WHO EBPDC10/5), which were introduced by the Director of the Evaluation Office. He said that the purpose of the joint review of the CCH was to assess its relevance, value added and effectiveness in relation to the current context, including the reforms initiated by the Secretary-General and other forms of inter-agency cooperation, and to propose recommendations. The review, conducted by the evaluation units of UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO, recommended that the CCH be discontinued in the light of other recent forms of coordination. (See chapter III, decision 2004/1 for the text of the decision adopted by the Executive Board.)

H. Private Sector Division(PSD): work plan and proposed budget for 2004

44. The Executive Board had before it the PSD work plan and proposed budget for 2004 (E/ICEF/2004/AB/L.1), which was introduced by the Director of PSD.

45. Delegations commended PSD and the National Committees for the excellent results achieved in 2003. One speaker recommended that UNICEF and PSD present their budgets to the Board at the same session, possibly in December, as opposed to during two separate sessions. The Director responded that this timing was not feasible for PSD, as its annual budget was based on the latest market results and needed the extra month to finalize figures. The Deputy Executive Director, Operations, said that the PSD budget had to be presented annually because of the nature of the Division's business, and the support budget was presented on a biennial basis. However, at the annual session in June, the Board would consider changing the timing of the biennial budget presentation.

Depending on what date was chosen, the two budgets possibly could be presented simultaneously every second year.

46. Several delegations requested a clearer presentation in future of several items in the documen including the costs of fund-raising. Speakers endorsed and requested further information on the strengthened support for fund-raising initiatives in field offices and countries in transition, which, in addition to raising funds, helped to raise awareness about the work of UNICEF and child-related issues in these countries. Another delegation stressed the significance of sales from the cards and gif business in the PSD portfolio, which contributed to profits and helped to keep UNICEF in the public eye.

47. A number of delegations expressed support for the Division's private sector fund-raising (PSFR) efforts, which now generated the bulk of income. Some delegations, however, found the 200 and 2005 objectives for regular resources income overly optimistic. The Director responded that the projections were based on direct input from National Committees. The projections were reliable, given the closer working relationship between the National Committees, the Regional Office for Europe and PSD, as exemplified in the Joint Strategic Planning process; the increased investment in and focus on implementing proven strategies; and the continued weaker United States dollar. The Director explained the positive impact of the weaker dollar at the revenue line and the negative impa on the bulk of PSD expense categories. One speaker suggested that, for clarity, increased income due to favourable exchange rates could be more clearly identified in the document. Some delegations strongly commended the improved relationship between National Committees and PSD. Another

speaker noted the improved reporting capacity and the analysis available of all private sector revenues and expenditures within PSD, which facilitated decision-making.

48. Responding to a question about the apparent diversity in planning time-lines included in the various reports submitted to the Board, e.g., the PSD annual work plan and business plan, and the MTSP and medium-term financial plan, the Director said that there was internal synchronization in terms of the key financial targets of the various plans.

49. See chapter III, decision 2004/2, for the decision adopted by the Executive Board.

I. Working methods of the Executive Board

50. The President and Vice-President of the WFP Executive Board made a presentation on the WFP Governance Project, which had begun in 1999. The WFP Board had examined its relationship with the secretariat and working methods, and had undertaken a series of reforms as a result. These included the development of a new strategic plan and results-based approach to the Executive Board's work, focusing on its functions, procedures, programme of work and structure. Key to the success of the project were informal consultations as a basis for the Board's discussions and the improved quality of documentation and the Board's discussions.

51. The Secretary of the Executive Board reported on the dialogue with other funds and programmes on improving working methods that had been requested in decision 2003/14. Together

with the Secretary of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board, he had attended a session of the WFP Board to assess what lessons learned from the WFP Governance Project might be relevant to UNICEF. The two Boards were different in many ways. For example, in contrast to the UNICEF Board, the WFP Board had limited participation by observer delegations. The WFP Board had a biennial programme of work, in contrast to the annual programme of UNICEF. The WFP Board used succession planning in electing its Bureau to ensure continuity, and the UNDP/UNFPA Board also had a provision in its rules of procedure allowing Bureau members (except for the President) to serve a two-year term.

52. For its part, he said, the UNICEF Board had improved its working methods gradually in recent years. Frequent informal consultations and regional and bilateral briefings maintained a constant dialogue between the secretariat and delegations. Following the initiative of the former President, Ambassador Staehelin (Switzerland), the Bureau now met monthly during the year and daily during Board sessions. The secretariat was working consistently to improve the timeliness and quality of documentation, although the analytical quality could still be improved. In terms of coordination, the Bureaux of the three funds and programmes had come to an early agreement on the agenda of the joint meeting of the three Boards and on the destination of the joint field visit.

53. Several delegations agreed that the experience of WFP proved that a pragmatic approach led to results, and what UNICEF required was a change of behaviour on the part of delegations, a pragmatic, step-by-step approach and not a large-scale revision of the Board's rules and procedures. Board members should focus on strategic issues and prepare well for the sessions. Speakers also expressed support for the development of a multi-year agenda to coordinate strategic discussion of the MTSP

priorities at every session. It was suggested that documents contain clear options for decision by the Board. A group of delegations said that it was time to move forward on a number of points, specifically the written presentation of documents and the definition of the Board's work programme, although that would not finish the job of improving working methods.

54. Questions were raised about the WFP experience of using rapporteurs for Board sessions, about the status of observers vis-à-vis members of the Executive Board and about the time available for informal consultations. A speaker said that in New York, delegations covered many different meetings simultaneously and did not have as much time as delegations in Rome for lengthy informal consultations. The WFP President said that the rapporteur worked with the secretariat to prepare a draft report summarizing the conclusions of each meeting, which was then presented to the Board at its next session for approval. Several speakers said that they were satisfied with the current system used by UNICEF, under which the secretariat prepared a draft and shared it with members for comment before submitting it for translation.

55. Other delegations said that they did not see any need to reform the Board's working methods, as the Board functioned very well under its current systems and the question of reform might overshadow more substantive programmatic discussions. Speakers thought that it was important to strengthen the participation of UNICEF field staff in the Board's meetings, to give a clearer picture of country programme operations. It was also suggested that the process for introducing draft decisions during sessions be more transparent, that draft decisions be made available in languages in time to allow for discussion, and that the role of the Vice-Presidents be strengthened to ensure adequate

coordination and consultation within the regional groups. (See chapter III, decision 2004/4, for the text of the decision taken by the Executive Board.)

J. Pledging event

56. The Deputy Executive Director, Operations, opened the pledging event by stating that while UNICEF had a clear programme direction to reach the Millennium Development Goals and create a world fit for children, the availability and predictability of regular resources were not sufficient to enable the organization to deliver the results-oriented programme envisaged in the MTSP. However, more Governments were recognizing the importance of core financing for UNICEF activities. In 2003, UNICEF had, for the second consecutive year, achieved an increase in the level of regular resources from Governments, with preliminary total reaching $403 million, an increase of $35 million over 2002. She expressed appreciation for the voluntary contributions made to UNICEF regular resources in 2003 from 35 high-income, 37 middle-income and 18 low-income countries. She made special reference to 28 countries that had increased their contributions, in particular, the 18 countries with increases of 7 per cent or more. She also thanked the programme countries and the National Committees for their support.

57. During the ensuing pledging event, 38 delegations made interventions, 21 from high-income countries, 10 from middle-income countries and 7 from low-income countries. Including the pledges received prior to the pledging event, the secretariat received 55 pledges amounting to $257.3 million.

Four countries provided payment schedules and 15 countries gave tentative pledges for future years. Two low-income countries - Azerbaijan and Senegal - pledged for the first time.

K. Other matters

Presentation on iodine deficiency disorders

58. The Chairman of the International Council for the Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (ICCIDD) made a presentation on the progress and challenges in meeting the global goal of sustainable elimination of iodine deficiency by 2005. He highlighted the damaging effects of iodine deficiency on early childhood development and economic progress, noting that since 1990 the world has seen much improvement, including a doubling of the number of households using iodized salt, the main intervention against IDD. As a result, tens of millions of children are protected from learning disabilities every year. He commended UNICEF for taking the lead in global IDD elimination and urged UNICEF to continue its work, although redoubled efforts were needed to sustain gains made, reach the remaining populations in need of protection and reverse the backsliding witnessed in several countries, with coverage rates declining from as high as 90 per cent to 60 per cent. He referred to the successful international meeting on IDD elimination, held in Beijing in October 2003, and mentioned efforts under way to make IDD an agenda item at the upcoming World Health Assembly and General Assembly session.

59. Several delegations stressed the importance of IDD elimination, urged UNICEF to continue its leadership in this area and asked about steps being taken to counter backsliding and reach the 2005 goal. One speaker said that there was a misconception in his and other countries that iodized salt had been used as a contraceptive, which affected coverage rates. The Deputy Executive Director, Operations, said that both the Global Network for IDD Elimination and UNICEF were closely monitoring the situation through the country and regional offices. The ICCIDD Chairman said that a substantial number of countries would reach the 2005 goal, and the Deputy Executive Director said that UNICEF would push for its achievement. Among the steps needed were the renewal and solidification of alliances at the country level, particularly with the salt industry and consumer groups, and to invest in communication for behavioural change so that people would understand why they were being urged to consume iodized salt.

Presentation on polio eradication

60. The presentation began with a video statement by the Secretary-General calling on world leaders to reaffirm their commitment to eradicate polio and pledging continued United Nations support for this effort. The Representative of the WHO Director-General for Polio Eradication gave a progress report on the global effort to eradiate polio and described the funding needs and strategic plan for 2004-2008. Polio was now endemic in only six countries, with only 677 cases reported in 2003. However, there were serious concerns over the spread of the polio virus to once polio-free countries, and over $20 million had been spent in 2003 on mop-up campaigns in seven countries with importations. Despite the challenges, 2004 offered the best chance ever to ensure a polio-free world so

long as there was strong political and community commitment backed with adequate financial support. He commended UNICEF for its exemplary leadership role in advocacy and social mobilization, particularly in India, which had seen remarkable achievements in polio eradication over the past two years.

61. The Director, Programme Division, said that over 250 million children must be vaccinated in 2004 in order to accomplish the goal of eradicating polio. He reasserted the commitment of UNICEF and its partners to stand side-by-side with Governments to meet the challenges ahead. There had been recent achievements in various countries, thanks to the work of WHO, Rotary International, donors and the many other partners that supported the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. A representative of Rotary International added that Rotary had contributed nearly $600 million to polio eradication since the beginning of the programme in 1988. He reaffirmed Rotary's continued support and appealed for urgent contributions to close the $150 million gap in the funds needed to end polio transmission by 2005.

Presentation by the NGO Committee on UNICEF

62. A representative of the NGO Committee on UNICEF made a presentation on the Committee's roles and achievements in 2003. The Committee had met all five objectives for 2003 outlined in its memorandum of understanding with UNICEF. Among its accomplishments, the Committee had set up reporting systems in nine geographic regions corresponding to those of UNICEF and had introduced a sliding scale for membership dues, which helped more than triple its revenue during the first six

months of 2003. Emphasizing the Committee's special relationship with UNICEF and the central roles NGOs play in sustaining programmes and improving children's lives, she stressed that NGOs should not be "displaced" by other civil society organizations and expressed concern that NGOs were not listed among the key partners of the UNICEF Office of Public Partnerships.

63. She highlighted two issues requiring urgent attention: increasing rates of suicide among adolescents globally, and the state-sanctioned repression of gangs in several Central American countries. UNICEF was urged to allocate additional resources to preventing adolescent suicide and also to mainstreaming the issue into its programming. Regarding violence against gangs, UNICEF was encouraged to advocate the repeal of repressive legislation and the adoption of approaches that were humane and respectful of children's rights, and to prevent the export of repressive policies to other countries.

64. One speaker commended the NGO Committee for the important role it played, welcomed the continuing "voice" of the Committee at future Board meetings, and encouraged UNICEF to liaise with the Committee on the two important issues raised, which he said should receive more in-depth discussion within the Board. The representative of the Standing Group of the National Committees for UNICEF welcomed cooperation with the NGO Committee to promote the Convention on the Rights of the Child in industrialized countries and encouraged a continued tripartite relationship among the NGO Committee, the Office of Public Partnerships and the Standing Group.

65. The Deputy Executive Director, Alliances and Resources, lauded the valuable 50-year partnership between UNICEF and the NGO Committee and stated that the primary purpose of the

Office of Public Partnerships was to cultivate and strengthen partnerships with NGOs. UNICEF was pursuing strong relationships with NGOs through such channels as the Global Movement for Children and United Nations initiatives. UNICEF would play a useful advocacy role in addressing the two alarming issues highlighted by the NGO Committee, which were priorities for the United Nations as well.

L. Closing of the session

66. The Deputy Executive Director, Operations, said that the session had been highly productive and featured excellent dialogue on a number of issues. The pledging event was very promising and demonstrated broad-based support of UNICEF by industrialized and developing countries.

67. The President commended delegations for their strong participation, especially during discussions on key child rights issues and on improving working methods of the Board. He said that the Board had made good progress in approving 13 country programmes, and he commended those present for a successful pledging event.

III. Decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its first regular session of 2004

2004/1. Discontinuation of the WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA Coordinating Committee on Health

The Executive Board

Takes note of the reports on the evaluation of the WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA Coordinating Committee on Health (CCH) (E/ICEF/2004/6 and WHO EBPDC10/5) and *endorses* the recommendation contained therein, namely, that in the light of alternative collaborative arrangements that have been developed since its establishment in 1997, and the balance of costs and achievements, the CCH should be discontinued. The Board *recommends* that the secretariats of the three organizations continue to strengthen coordination among themselves in the area of health.

First regular session

21 January 2004

2004/2. Private Sector Division work plan and proposed budget for 2004

A. Private Sector Division budgeted expenditures for the 2004 season

The Executive Board

1. Approves for the fiscal year 1 January to 31 December 2004 budgeted expenditures of $89.0 million as detailed below and summarized in column II of table 7 to document E/ICEF/2004/AB/L.1:

	(In millions of United States dollars)
Commissions – field offices	1.2
Cost of goods delivered	30.5
Marketing expenditures	22.3
Support services	18.6
Investment funds	16.4
Total expenditures, consolidated	89.0

2. *Authorizes* the Executive Director:

(a) To incur expenditures as summarized in column II of table 7 to document E/ICEF/2004/AB/L.1 and to increase expenditures up to the level indicated in column III of the same table should the apparent proceeds from card and gift sales and/or private sector fund-raising increase to the levels indicated in column III, and accordingly, to reduce expenditures below the level indicated in column II to the extent necessary, should the net proceeds decrease;

(b) To redeploy resources between the various budget lines (as detailed in paragraph 1 above) up to a maximum of 10 per cent of the amounts approved;

(c) To spend an additional amount between Executive Board sessions, when necessary, up to the amount caused by currency fluctuations, to implement the 2004 approved work plan.

B. Budgeted income for the 2004 season

The Executive Board

Notes that for the period 1 January to 31 December 2004, PSD net proceeds are budgeted at $333.0 million (regular resources) as shown in column II of table 7 to document E/ICEF/2004/AB/L.1.

C. Policy issues

The Executive Board

1. *Renews* investment funds with $16.4 million established for 2004;

2. *Authorizes* the Executive Director to incur expenditures in the 2004 fiscal period related to the cost of goods delivered (production/purchase of raw materials, cards and other products) for the 2005 fiscal year up to $31.0 million as indicated in the PSD medium-term plan (see table 6 of document E/ICEF/2004/AB/L.1).

D. Medium-term plan

The Executive Board

Approves the PSD medium-term plan as reflected in table 6 to document E/ICEF/2004/AB/L.1.

First regular session

21 January 2004

2004/3. Annual report to the Economic and Social Council

The Executive Board,

1. *Takes note of* the "Report of the Executive Director: Annual Report to the Economic and Social Council" (E/2004/3-E/ICEF/2004/4), and requests the secretariat to transmit it, along with a summary of the comments made during the discussions at the first regular session of the Executive Board for 2004, to the Economic and Social Council;

2. *Attaches* great importance to the upcoming triennial comprehensive policy review, and to its contribution to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and follow-up to the General Assembly Special Session on Children;

3. *Encourages* UNICEF to participate actively in supporting that process, *inter alia* by sharing all relevant evaluative and other material with the United Nations Secretariat.

First regular session

22 January 2004

2004/4. Working methods of the Executive Board

The Executive Board,

Recalling its decision 2003/14 requesting the Bureau to explore approaches to further improving working methods and to report its finding,

1. *Takes note* of the oral report by the Secretary of the Executive Board and acknowledges the positive work done to date;

2. *Requests* the Bureau to continue its leading role on this issue, taking into account the views expressed by delegations at the current session, with a view to further enhancing the ability of the Board to discharge its duties and to provide strategic guidance;

3. *Further requests* the Bureau to submit specific recommendations for discussion at the Board's annual session in 2004, including the issues of:

(a) the timely submission, presentation and analytical content of documents, including draft decisions;

(b) the Executive Board's work planning process;

(c) the use and timing of informal briefings.

First regular session
22 January 2004